

November 30, 2021

Shiway Wang
Executive Director
Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
4230 University Drive, Suite 220
Anchorage, AK 99508-4650

RE: North Gulf Oceanic Society Funding

Dear Executive Director Wang,

I am writing to urge you to fund the long-standing killer whale monitoring study in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords conducted by the North Gulf Oceanic Society (NGOS).

I am a USCG licensed Captain for Stan Stephens Cruises, located in Valdez, and have worked for the company since 1995. For the last two decades, I have witnessed the public's love and interest in these animals explode to the point where I feel confident saying killer whales have become the most beloved animal in Prince William Sound.

Since 1984, the NGOS has accumulated a long-term dataset for killer whales that is quite remarkable for Alaskan waters, and for the last three decades, NGOS has been able to accomplish this through funding from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC). Of particular interest is the information gained about the AB and AT1 pods, both of which swam through the spill and subsequently lost many members. The EVOSTC states on their website that "Long-term monitoring after a spill has two components: monitoring the recovery of resources from the initial injury and monitoring how factors other than oil may inhibit full recovery or adversely impact recovered resources". The future work proposed by the NGOS directly meets both of these components and is supported by the Science Panel, the Executive Director and the Public Advisory Committee. Therefore, it was an absolute shock to me to learn that the Trustees had decided to eliminate the funding for the NGOS.

I am very fortunate to see multiple pods of killer whales from our vessels throughout the summer. After we leave the animals for the day, tourists often comment to me about how much knowledge I have about these pods. Nearly all this information has been given to me by the NGOS. The photo catalogues they provide to operators like us are invaluable. It helps to ID pods and their members, as well as their age and relationships. There is no other mean to obtain this information for the killer whales of Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords. This catalogue goes back decades, it would be devastating to lose this information.

I frequently get to show tourists both the AB and AT1 pods, oftentimes right at Bligh Reef. Seeing the AT1 pod is one of the most rewarding, yet emotionally difficult things to narrate about to our passengers. The oil spill had a devastating impact on this extremely unique pod, and their future is grim. Yet I have always been able to add in some positive highlights to the AT1

story based on updates about the pod passed on by the NGOS. Telling their story provides a natural lead-in to speak about the EVOSTC and the funding allocated for the long-term study of killer whales. I cannot imagine telling that story now, explaining to visitors from all over the world, that the Trustees decided that these animals are no longer deserving of the funds from the oil spill they and their families swam through.

Please consider funding the continuation of the long-term monitoring of the killer whale populations in Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Amanda Bauer

P.O. Box 2953

Valdez, AK 99686

amanda@stephencruises.com

907-831-0403

CC: General EVOS Trustee Council

Craig O'Connor, NOAA

North Gulf Oceanic Society